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COORDINATOR, KYUNG-WHA KANG**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS  
TO THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF DEFENCE STUDIES**

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*As delivered*

On behalf of Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, it is a great pleasure to address the Royal College of Defence Studies and to give you a glimpse of the challenges we are facing in the humanitarian community.

After my presentation, followed by some questions and answers, I do hope that you will come away from this with the conviction that these problems are something that each of us must contribute to resolving, be it from our individual military, political, or humanitarian perspective.

My thanks to the Permanent Mission of the UK and Ambassador Grant for giving myself and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) the opportunity to be here.

Firstly, let me offer you in broad strokes the humanitarian challenges facing the world today.

The number of people affected by conflict, natural disasters, poverty and hunger is on the rise, casting a record number of people around the world into untold suffering every year.

In many corners of the world, armed violence continues to kill, destroy lives, and force millions into displacement. Indeed, it is in and around conflict-torn countries where the largest humanitarian operations are on-going today.

Meanwhile, the combined effects of climate change, water scarcity and environmental degradation, population growth, urbanization, and volatile food and energy prices, are making more people vulnerable to crisis each year and are eroding their ability to cope with external shocks.

This convergence of global trends is both increasing the risk of major crises, as well as increasing their scope, their impact and their complexity.

In 2014, UN agencies and their partners are targeting 76 million people in need of humanitarian aid. This number does not represent all people in need, only those we consider to be most vulnerable.

Many conflicts and natural disasters are slow to build and protracted in nature, giving us more time to plan ahead. The same crises: Democratic Republic of Congo, occupied Palestinian Territories, Sudan among them, have featured among the top ten funding appeals for over a decade.

But while the humanitarian sector is learning lessons and improving its performance, we are chronically over-stretched. The number of people in need of aid has increased six-fold over the past decade causing the number of people with unmet needs also to rise. One third of the assistance aid agencies called for in 2013 was never received.

These challenges are driving us to re-evaluate whether the current humanitarian system, in its current form, is fit for the purpose of responding to crises year after year. Do we have the right human and financial resources, the right tools, the right approaches to deliver relevant, high-quality aid to all who need it when they need it? And if not: How do we need to change?

To help improve the lives of millions of people affected by crisis and conflict each year, first and foremost, we must bring a definitive and lasting end to the conflicts and violence around the world, and prevent new ones from flaring up. This perhaps is essentially a task for political and security leaders within affected countries and at the regional and international levels. But the humanitarian community needs to be persistent in its advocacy on the populations caught up in the conflicts.

There are three other anchors around which we must all work together.

First, we need to drive down humanitarian demand by doing more to reduce the risk of disasters from destroying people's lives.

Second, we need to increase the amount of funding available for humanitarian response and identify innovative funding models.

Third, we must improve operational effectiveness, which will include making sure we exploit the strengths of all humanitarian actors and partners, including those of you in this room.

### *Driving down the demand*

Most of you already know that 2015 is an important year for the UN, as we are in the midst of negotiating the next generation development goals, called the Sustainable Development Goals to succeed and build upon the MDGs. We are also crafting the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action for disaster risk reduction. We also hope to come to a lasting agreement on targets in the Climate Change talks.

How is this relevant to the humanitarian domain? Because we need to shift our focus from responding to humanitarian crises to tackling the risk of crises well beforehand. This requires upping the amount humanitarians spend on disaster preparedness - currently at just 4.7 per cent of OECD DAC donor humanitarian aid - but also more response from our development, disaster risk reduction and climate change colleagues.

We need to shift from yearly humanitarian planning to three-to-five- year cycles. The illusion that humanitarian operations are a short term intervention must be dispelled. Crises, from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Syria, show that humanitarian needs endure. Donors are starting to recognize this: Somalia and the Sahel have launched three-year funding appeals so that humanitarian partners can focus on life-saving but also resilience-boosting projects. Efforts such as these must become the norm.

Finally, to drive down demand, humanitarians, as well as political and military actors, need to develop better risk analysis so that we all do better at identifying and addressing the root causes of crisis. This involves both developing new tools and finding better ways to tap into the vast amount of data already available to model risk.

### *Finding new funding models*

The humanitarian system as we know it was established on the foundations of a post-WWII world whereby developed nations in the “North” took it upon themselves to transfer resources to less developed nations in the “South”.

This model of humanitarian aid is eroding as globalization and economic development transform the economies of countries such as Brazil, China and India.

Southern governments are collaborating in aid response: witness India, Brazil and South Africa’s Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund for instance; disaster-affected national governments, from Pakistan to the Philippines are taking the lead in humanitarian assistance at home; civil society groups and Diaspora members from Somalia to Sierra Leone are organizing to raise money and implement response. These dynamics are overturning past aid models and call for new ways of working, increased dialogue and mutual understanding.

This is not a simple question of figuring out how to get more money. Challenging questions include: Who will be giving and receiving funding in the future? What can be done to ensure that the money is spent efficiently and accountably? What kinds of partnerships will be needed? How can financing models become more sustainable? Developing answers to these questions will involve a much larger group of actors than just the “traditional aid actors”. Affected people, bank directors, telecoms companies, citizen action groups, and private donors must also help shape this debate.

### *Improving aid effectiveness*

To better cope with the increasing humanitarian needs, we all need to improve our effectiveness. This encompasses many things, from speeding up aid response to improving the quality of the aid we deliver, and making sure aid supports, rather than erodes, longer term development activities.

The expectations placed upon humanitarians have expanded significantly from what was originally envisaged as responding to life-saving needs and meeting gaps in basic services.

Humanitarian actors are now being called upon to deal with the consequences of crises that have their roots in political differences, pushes for power and conflict. They are expected to help protect civilians from violence; to reduce the risk of disaster; and to

promote economic livelihoods, among other priorities. To do this we need to identify where we add value and when other actors need to do more to pull their weight.

From the humanitarian perspective, improving aid effectiveness involves finding better ways to invest in national NGOs; consulting communities so they have a say in shaping the response; and finding the right balance between standardized and individualized aid packages, among other challenges.

At the global level, we hope to come up with concrete recommendations on how to tackle these challenges at the World Humanitarian Summit, convened by the UN Secretary-General, which will take place in Istanbul in 2016.

But we will not find all the answers within the humanitarian sector – we must draw lessons from you, the military; the private sector; communities themselves, and beyond.

Alongside communities themselves, national civil society groups, private companies, military actors play an instrumental role in disasters. From Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines to the National Disaster Response Force in India following Cyclone Phailin, military actors are often the provider of first resort. Military forces have the expertise, logistical capacity, manpower, organizational structure, and discipline, which can provide security and efficient support in a humanitarian crisis.

Thus, our ongoing civil-military dialogue is vital to ensuring that the cooperation between humanitarians and the military is both mutually beneficial, and preserves each of our unique positions.

This is particularly important in conflict situations, where protection of civilians is at stake.

From Syria to South Sudan, civilians make up the majority of casualties in conflict zones worldwide. Civilians are killed and injured in targeted or indiscriminate attacks in violation of international humanitarian law. Conflict and violence drives civilians from their homes, destroys their property, and may bar people from accessing basic services such as water and electricity, health clinics or schools. Between 2002 and 2013, over 80 per cent of the money humanitarians asked for through UN interagency humanitarian appeals was for assistance to people affected by conflict.

As the battlefield increasingly shifts towards densely populated urban areas, advocacy must continue to push parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law to distinguish between military targets and civilians.

During 2013, some 37,809 people were killed and injured by explosive weapons, of whom 82 per cent were civilians.

A clear boundary around the use of wide-area effect explosive weapons in populated areas would be a helpful tool for addressing this. Some military forces have instituted policy and practice that limit the use of certain weapons in certain contexts, beyond the requirements of international humanitarian law. OCHA is working to capture this sort of practice and policy. This is an example of how humanitarian, political and military actors can work together to understand and mitigate the impact of conflict on civilians.

Faced with these challenges, humanitarian organizations must abide by the principles which govern our work and are key to independence and impartiality of action, and turn them into practical tools to help us mitigate the impact of crisis and to provide aid to the vulnerable, on the battlefield and beyond.

I would like to conclude my remarks, by wishing you a most engaging time here with the Royal College of Defence Studies, and wish you a safe return to your positions back at home. We hope to see you in the near future, perhaps working hand in hand in to alleviate humanitarian suffering in some corner of the world. We consider you as partners. Please consider us as yours.

Humanitarians do not have a monopoly on humanitarian action. We never did, and never will.

Thank you.